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Driver restriction apparatus for restricting a vehicle driver.

A memory (24) stores the same information as that stored in an electronic license (10) and a readout section (22) reads out the license information by the electronic license (10). A control section (21) determines whether or not the electronic license (10) is the same as that owned by the owner, with the use of the information read out of the electronic license. In the case where the electronic license (10) is the same as that of the vehicle owner, the license information or information such as the name of a person granted to use the owner's vehicle, if being entered from a keyboard (23), is stored in the memory (24). Upon the entering of the license information into a present device via a keyboard (23), a control unit (21) compares the entered license information with grant information for granting the use of the owner's vehicle which is stored in the memory (24). If there occurs a coincidence, a key-lock section (25) unlocks a steering wheel (29) so that the authorized person can drive an engine (30) by an engine control unit (26).

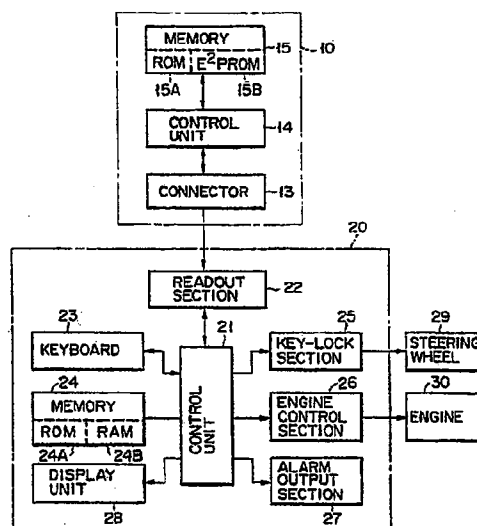


FIG. 2

Driver restriction apparatus for restricting a vehicle driver

The present invention relates to a driver restriction apparatus for restricting the driver to a legitimate one or ones who can drive an owner's vehicle with the use of an electronic driver license having an integrated circuit for storing, for example, vehicle license information.

As well known, a vehicle such as an automobile can be driven by anyone, including the automobile owner, with the use of an automobile's key.

There is a recent large increase in the robbery of vehicles and in the crimes against various types of vehicles.

In order to prevent the robbery of the vehicles, all that is required in this connection is to prevent anyone, other than a true car's owner, from driving that can readily. If, on the other hand, anyone able to drive the owner's car is restricted only to the owner, then the car cannot be utilized to the fullest extent. It is desired, therefore, that anyone, other than the true owner, should drive the car under a given allowed condition.

It is accordingly the object of the present invention to provide a driver restriction apparatus which can restrict a car driver only to a car owner or an authorized person or persons.

According to the present invention, there is provided a driver restriction apparatus for restricting a vehicle driver to authorized persons, which comprises:

means for identifying an owner of a vehicle;
means for designating a lend of the vehicle to a person which is granted by the owner;
first input means for inputting information to identify a renter, when the lend of the vehicle is designated by the designating means;
means for storing the renter identifying information inputted by the first input means;
second input means for inputting a renter information by the renter person; and
means for granting to use the vehicle when the renter information inputted by the second input means coincides with the renter identifying information stored in the storing means.

According to the present invention, information for granting the use of a vehicle to a person with a car owner's permission is input to the device after the car owner has been identified and stored in a memory. The person can drive the owner's vehicle when the grant information stored in the memory coincides with the corresponding grant information which is input by the person. In this way, not only the car owner but also the authorized person or persons only can drive the vehicle and anyone, other than the aforementioned legitimate persons,

cannot drive the car of interest. It is thus possible to grant the use of a car to a number of authorized persons, while preventing a possible car robbery beforehand.

Further, the memory stores the information of the authorized persons, as history information, who have actually driven the car of interest. It is possible to readily know the state in which the car of interest has so far been used for driving.

This invention can be more fully understood from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figs. 1A and 1B are a top plan view and a bottom view, respectively, showing an electronic driver license according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a schematic view showing the electronic license of the present invention;

Fig. 3 illustrates an inner arrangement of a vehicle;

Fig. 4 illustrates stored information in a memory; and

Figs. 5A and 5B show a flowchart for explaining the operation of Fig. 2.

An apparatus according to one embodiment of the present invention will be explained below with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Figs. 1A and 1B show an electronic license 10 for a car driver which is used in the form of the so-called IC card. The electronic license 10 displays license information 11 and an "imaged" face of a driver on the major surface, as shown in Fig. 1A, in the same way as the ordinary driver's license and a connector 13 composed of a plurality of contacts on the rear surface as shown in Fig. 1B. The electronic license contains, for example, a memory for storing the same information as that of the license information.

Fig. 2 shows a driver restriction apparatus 20 which is placed in proper place in the interior of an automobile.

In the driver restriction apparatus 20, a readout section 22, keyboard 23, memory 24, key-lock section 25, engine control section 26, alarm output section 27 and display unit 28 are connected to a control unit 21 which is as a CPU of a microcomputer.

As shown in Fig. 3, for example, the readout section 22 is provided on a location in a vehicle 40, such as a front panel 41 or an outer surface of a door. The readout section 22 is composed of a known IC card readout device and reads stored information out of the electronic license 10. The readout section 22 includes a load/unload mecha-

nism for loading and unloading an IC card, not shown. The electronic license 10, upon being inserted into the readout section, is automatically loaded into a proper location and, upon the completion of an information read-out operation and so on, automatically unloaded out of the readout section 22.

The electronic license 10 includes a control unit 14 as a CPU of a microcomputer which is connected to a connector 13 and to a memory 15. The memory 15 includes a ROM 15A and E²PROM 15B. The ROM 15A stores, for example, a program for controlling an operation of the control unit 14 and the E²PROM 15B initially stores, for example, the address, name, birth date and license number of an owner, the types of licenses such as one for an ordinary-sized car or one for a large-sized vehicle and the code number of the owner.

The keyboard 23 can enter the code number and various instructions and is located, for example, in the neighborhood of the readout section 22.

The memory 24 includes, for example, a ROM 24A and RAM 24B. ROM 24A stores, for example, a program for controlling the operation of the control unit 21. RAM 24B stores, as shown in Fig. 4, information LI for a car owner's license, authorized person information EPI, PI and history information EHI, HI representing the state of a vehicle's run.

The license information LI is composed of the address, name, birth date and license number of the owner, the code number of the owner, and so on as in the case of those stored in E²PROM of the electronic license 10.

Person information EPI is composed of, as will be set out below, a license number, code number, and so on, of a person authorized to run the vehicle using the person's electronic license. Person information PI is composed of a license number, code number, and so on, of a person authorized to run the vehicle without utilizing the electronic license.

History information EHI is composed of a license number, a drive start time and drive end time of a person who ran the vehicle using the person's electronic license. History information HI is composed of a license number, drive start time and drive end time of a person who ran the vehicle without utilizing the electronic license number.

The key-lock section 25 locks or unlocks, for example, a steering wheel 29 of the vehicle under the control of the control unit 21.

The engine control unit 26 starts or stops, for example, the engine 30 of the vehicle under the control of the control unit 21.

The alarm output section 27 is composed of, for example, a buzzer and, when the control unit 21 compares the information stored in the electronic license with the information stored in RAM 24B, a

result of comparison is sent to the alarm output section. The alarm output section 27 produces an alarm sound when a noncoincidence occurs between both the information.

The display section 28 is located in the neighborhood of the keyboard 23 to display information entered from the keyboard 23, various messages delivered from the control unit 21, drive history stored in RAM 24B, and so on.

Operation of the apparatus thus constructed will be explained below.

First, let it be assumed that the vehicle's owner runs his or her vehicle with the use of the electronic license 10.

The control unit 21 normally reads out the information of the electronic license 10 which has been inserted into the readout section 22 and is set to a determination mode for determining whether or not the owner is a legitimate one.

When, in this state, the electronic license 10 is inserted into the readout section 22 (step ST1) and the code number of the owner is entered as input data from the keyboard 23, the entered code number data is supplied via control circuit 21, readout section 22 to the control unit 14 of the electronic license 10 where it is compared with the code number stored in the memory 15 (steps ST2, ST3). If both the code numbers coincide with each other upon comparison, it is determined whether or not the vehicle of interest is lent (step ST4).

If, at this time, an instruction not to grant the use of the vehicle is entered from the keyboard 23, then the readout section 22 reads out the license data stored in the memory 15 in the electronic license 10 and a comparison is made between the information of the read-out license and the information LI of the license stored in RAM 24B (steps ST5 and ST6). If both the information coincide with each other upon comparison, it is determined whether or not the history information HI is read out (step ST7). If the read-out instruction is not entered, the electronic license 10 is discharged out of the readout section 22 (step ST8). Thereafter, the steering wheel 29 is unlocked by the key-lock section 25 and, at the same time, the engine 30 is started by the engine control section 26 so that the vehicle can be run (step ST9).

Let it be assumed that the owner of the vehicle grants the use of it to other persons. In this case, two cases may be considered: a case where the authorized person's electronic license is employed and a case where the electronic license is not employed.

First, let it be assumed that the use of the vehicle of interest is granted to a person with the use of his or her electronic license. In this case, the information stored in the person's electronic license is set, as person's information EPI, in RAM 24B.

This setting process is the same as those set forth above until steps ST1 to ST3.

In step ST4, control unit 21 discriminates whether or not the vehicle is lent using person's license, when it receives an instruction for granting the use of a vehicle of interest from the keyboard 23 (step ST10).

Upon the entering into the readout section 22 of an instruction for granting the use of the vehicle through the keyboard 23, a mode thus involved is a lend mode using the electronic license. If, in this state, the person's name 01, license number M1, and so on, are entered into the readout section 22 via the keyboard 23 of the device, then the corresponding information are stored as the information EPI of the person 01 into RAM 24B (step ST11) and the owner's electronic license is ejected out of the readout section 22 (step ST12).

When the electronic license of the person 01 is inserted into the readout section 22 with the information-EPI of the person 01 set (step ST13) and the person 01 enters his or her code number in the memory 15 of the electronic license via the keyboard 23, then the code number is compared with the code number stored in the memory 15 of the electronic license (steps ST14, ST15). That is, it is determined whether or not the bearer of the electronic license is a legitimate owner. In the event of a coincidence occurring upon comparison, the license information is read out of the electronic license of the person 01 by the readout section 22 and compared with the license information stored in RAM 24B (step ST16, ST17). That is, it is determined whether or not the bearer of the electronic license is a legitimate person, authorized by the owner. If yes, the electronic license of the person 01 is ejected out of the readout section 22 (step ST18). At the subsequent steps, as has already been set forth above, the steering wheel 29 is unlocked and the engine 30 is started so that the person 01 can run the vehicle (step ST9). When the result of comparison reveals a noncoincidence, the steering wheel is held locked.

In this way, the vehicle can be run with the use of the person's electronic license. EPI in Fig. 4 shows that persons 01 to 0n using the electronic license have been registered.

When the end-of-run information of the vehicle is entered by the keyboard or the engine is stopped, the steering wheel 29 is locked and the end-of-run information is stored as history information in the RAM 24B.

Let it be assumed that the use of the vehicle of interest is granted without the use of the electronic license. In this case, the same process as set forth above is performed until the steps ST1 to 4 and step 10.

If, at step ST10, an instruction for granting the

use of the vehicle of interest is given without the use of the person's electronic license, another lend mode is given to the user via the keyboard 23. Upon the entry of, for example, the name, company name, grant period, and so on, of the person into the device by the operation of the keyboard 23 in this state, these information items are stored as grant information items in RAM 24B (step ST19) and the electronic license of the owner is ejected out of the readout section 22 (step ST20).

If the lend information (person information) PI granting the use of the vehicle of interest not in the form of the electronic license is thus set in RAM 24B and, in this state, the lend information is entered by the person by the operation of the keyboard 13 (step ST21), then the entered lend information is compared with the lend information PI stored in RAM 24B (steps ST22, ST23). In the event of a coincidence occurring upon comparison, the steering wheel 29 is unlocked as set out above and the engine 30 is started so that the vehicle can be run (step ST9).

By so doing, the use of the vehicle of interest can be granted to a plurality of persons without the use of the electronic license. PI in Fig. 4 shows the state in which authorized persons 11 to in, not using the electronic license, are registered in RAM 24B.

In the case where one of these persons thus registered in the state shown drives the vehicle of interest, the license number, drive start time and drive end time of the real driver are stored as history information EHI and HI in RAM 24B.

If the history information EHI and HI which are stored in RAM 24B are to be known, it is only necessary to set a history information display mode. That is, if an instruction representing the history information display mode is entered at step ST7, history information EHI and HI stored are read out of RAM 24B at step ST24 and displayed on a display unit 28. It is thus possible to recognize, from the history information, the state in which the vehicle of interest has thus far been used for driving.

In the case where a noncoincidence occurs upon comparison between the code numbers or between the license numbers, the alarm output section 27 delivers an alarm output.

Further, if the electronic license is ejected by the alarm output section 27 out of the readout section, the alarm output section 27 delivers an alarm sound, prompting a person to withdraw the "ejected" electronic license away from the readout section.

In order for a started engine to be stopped, for example, an extra switch may be provided so that the engine of the vehicle may be stopped.

According to the aforementioned embodiment,

if a coincidence occurs upon comparison between the code numbers or between the license information items, the steering wheel 29 is unlocked so that the engine 30 can be run. It is thus possible to prevent a robbery of the vehicle, because upon a noncoincidence between the code numbers or between the license information items the vehicle of interest cannot be run by an unauthorized person.

The vehicle of interest can be run by an authorized person by setting the person's information items in the present device under a permission of the owner to grant the use of the vehicle of interest and entering the lend information items in that vehicle. Thus the vehicle can be fully utilized by a number of persons.

In the case where the vehicle is lent to the authorized person, he or she can select either one of a lend mode for granting the use of the vehicle authorized by the electronic license information and a lend mode for granting the use of the vehicle not in the form of the electronic license information. It is, therefore, possible to gain an advantage of using the vehicle in accordance with the situation under which it is placed.

The license information, company information and so on which are read out by the readout section 22 are stored in RAM 24B and held as history information there. It is, therefore, possible to readily know the state in which the vehicle has so far been used for driving.

Further, upon the start of the engine the electronic license 10 is ejected out of the readout section 22 and the driver never fails to forget the withdrawal of the electronic license 10 away from there.

Claims

1. A driver restriction apparatus for restricting a vehicle driver to authorized persons, characterized by comprising:

means (21) for identifying an owner of a vehicle;
means (23) for designating a lend of the vehicle to a person which is granted by the owner;
first input means (23) for inputting information to identify a renter, when the lend of the vehicle is designated by the designating means (23);
means (24) for storing the renter identifying information inputted by the first input means (23);
second input means (23) for inputting a renter information by the renter person; and
means (21) for granting to use the vehicle when the renter information inputted by the second input means (23) coincides with the renter identifying information stored in the storing means (24).

2. An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that said identifying means (21) com-

prises:

means (24) for storing owner's license information;
means for reading information stored in an electronic license (10) which contains information of the license; and

means (21) for comparing the information read out by the reading means (22) with the information stored in storing means (24).

3. An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that said designating means further includes mode designating means for designating a first mode for granting the use of a vehicle by said electronic license (10) and a second mode for granting the use of a vehicle without utilizing said electronic license.

4. An apparatus according to claim 3, characterized in that said first input means (23) has means for inputting the person's electronic license information when said first mode is set by said mode designating means.

5. An apparatus according to claim 3, characterized in that said first input means (23) has means for inputting the person's characteristic information when said second mode is set by said mode designating means.

6. An apparatus according to claim 3, characterized in that said second input means (23) has means for inputting person's information by said person when said first and second modes are set by said mode designating means.

7. An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that said granting means (21) comprises:

means (21) for comparing the information input by the second input means (23) with the information stored in said storing means (23).

8. An apparatus according to claim 7, characterized by further comprising:

means (25) for unlocking a steering wheel (29) in accordance with a noncoincidence output from the comparing means.

9. An apparatus according to claim 7, characterized by further comprising:

means for driving an engine in accordance with said coincidence output delivered from said comparing means (21).

10. An apparatus according to claim 4, characterized in that said electronic license (10) comprises:

means (13) for electrically connecting to said reading means (22);

means, connected to said connecting means (13), for processing information input via the connecting means and output information to the reading means (22) via the connecting means; and

means, connected to the processing means (14), for storing the information output from the processing means.

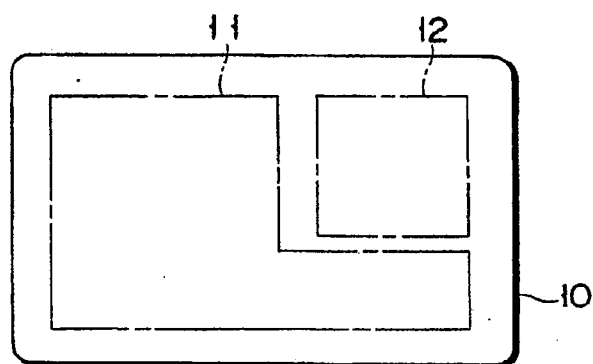


FIG. 1A

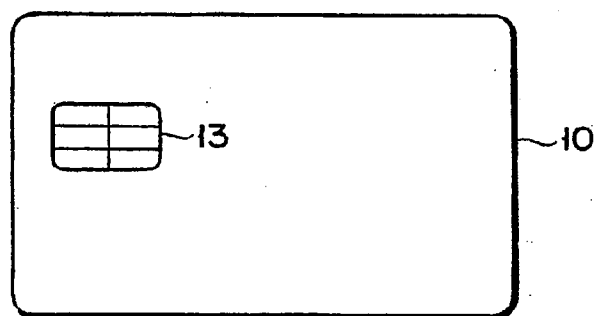


FIG. 1B

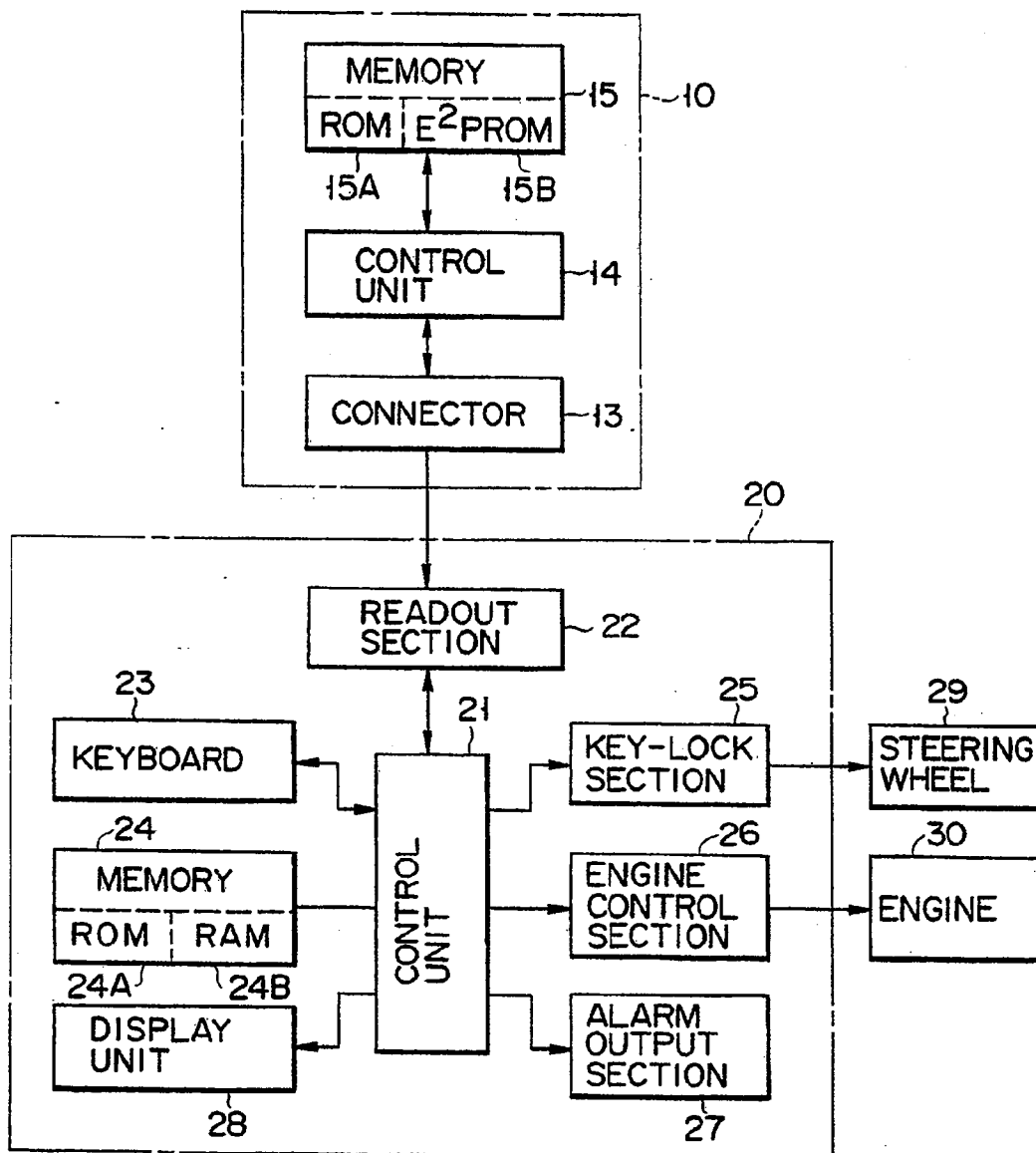


FIG. 2

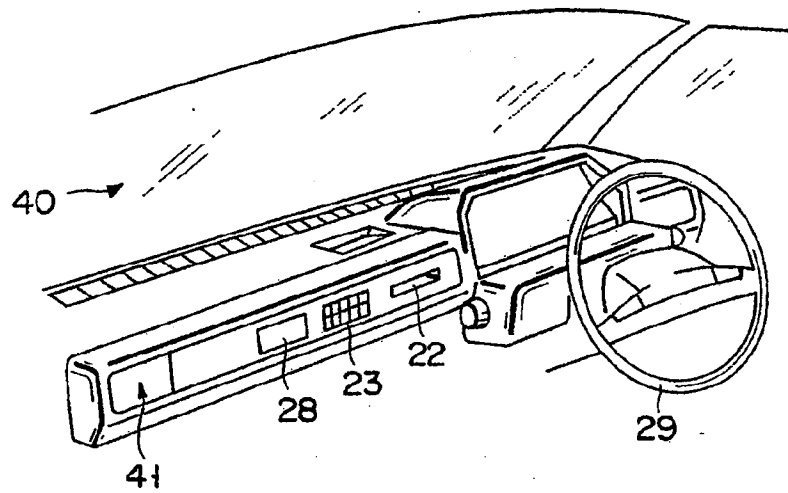


FIG. 3

| | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| LI | OWNER | LICENSE NUMBER M0 | CODE NUMBER C0 |
| | ADDRESS | | |
| | NAME | BIRTH DATE | |
| | DOMICILE | | |
| EPI | AUTHORIZED PERSON 01 | LICENSE NUMBER M1 | |
| | AUTHORIZED PERSON 02 | LICENSE NUMBER M2 | |
| | | | |
| | AUTHORIZED PERSON 0n | LICENSE NUMBER Mn | |
| PI | AUTHORIZED PERSON 11 | COMPANY NAME | LENT PERIOD |
| | AUTHORIZED PERSON 12 | COMPANY NAME | LENT PERIOD |
| | | | |
| | AUTHORIZED PERSON 1n | COMPANY NAME | LENT PERIOD |
| EHI | LICENSE NUMBER M1 | START TIME TS1 | END TIME TE1 |
| | LICENSE NUMBER M2 | START TIME TS2 | END TIME TE2 |
| | | | |
| | LICENSE NUMBER Mn | START TIME TSn | END TIME TEn |
| HI | COMPANY NAME | START TIME TS11 | END TIME TE11 |
| | COMPANY NAME | START TIME TS12 | END TIME TE12 |
| | | | |
| | COMPANY NAME | START TIME TS1n | END TIME TE1n |

24B

FIG. 4

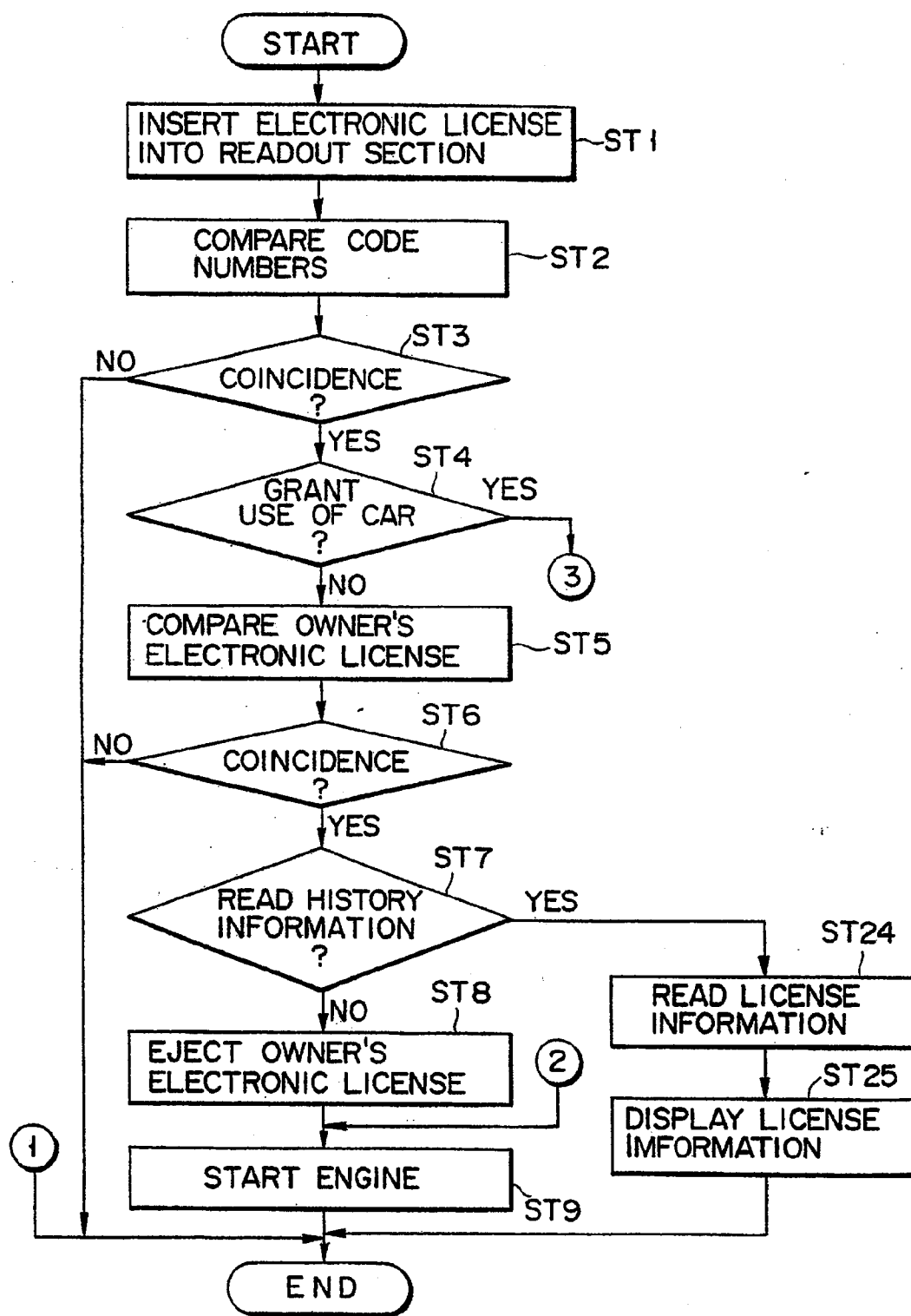


FIG. 5A

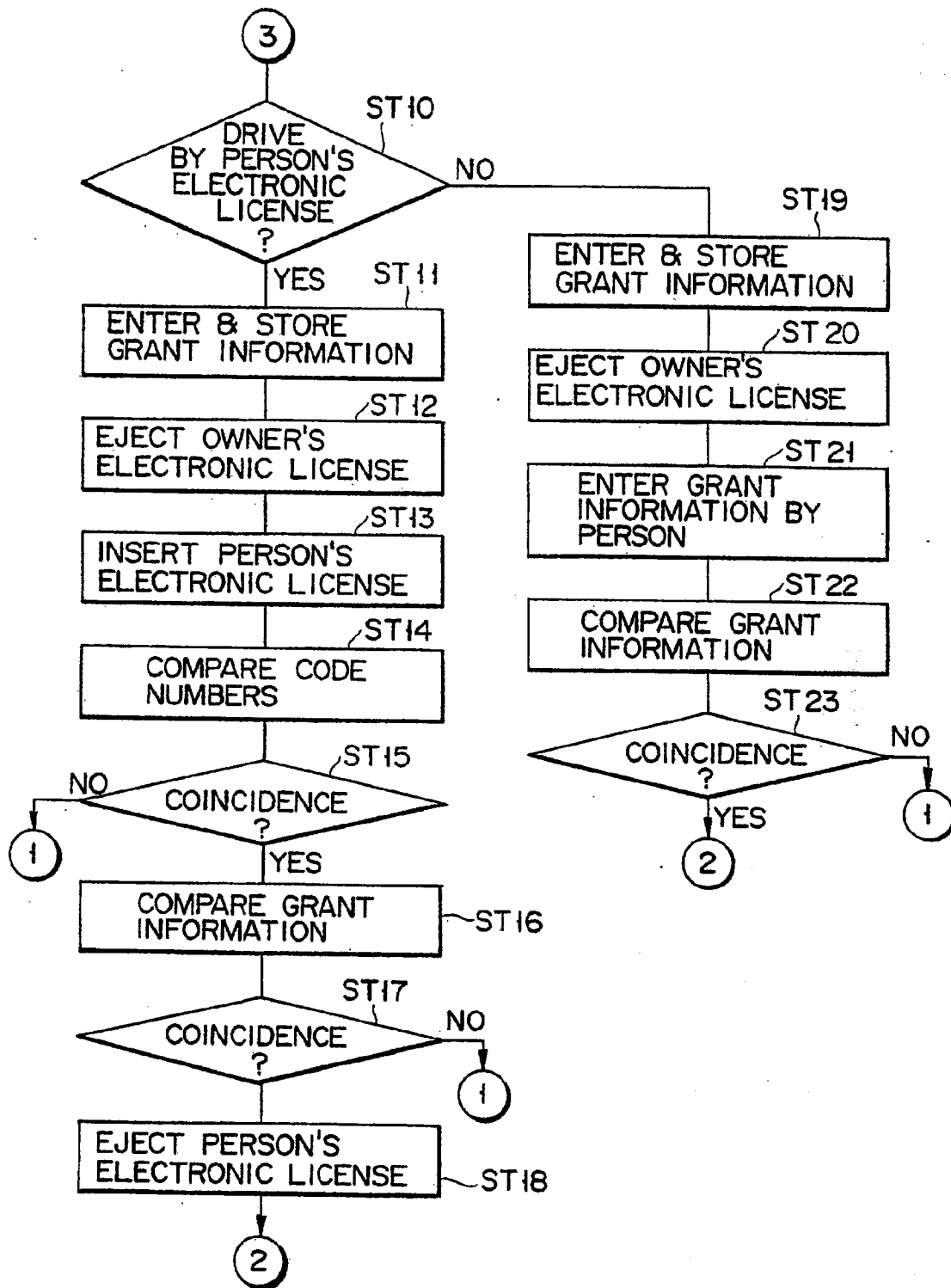


FIG. 5B



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 90 10 7421

| DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Category | Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages | Relevant to claim | CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5) |
| Y | WO-A-8403785 (ERNST) * page 8, line 10 - page 9, line 7 * * page 10, lines 14 - 22 * --- | 1-10 | B60R25/00 E05B49/00 |
| Y | EP-A-0152678 (RAYMOND) * page 2, line 33 - page 3, line 22 * * page 5, lines 16 - 21 * --- | 1-10 | |
| A | WO-A-8001477 (KEYCON CORPORATION) * page 4, lines 2 - 7 * --- | 1, 3, 4 | |
| A | US-A-4558175 (GENEST ET AL) * the whole document * --- | 1-7, 10 | |
| A | EP-A-0162171 (GENEST) * the whole document * --- | 1-7, 10 | |
| A | FR-A-2403914 (LICENTIA) * page 3, lines 10 - 27 * --- | 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10 | |
| A | GB-A-2051442 (HOWARD) * page 2, lines 25 - 36 * --- | 1, 2 | TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5) |
| A | GB-A-2136053 (ALLAN) * page 1, lines 50 - 78 * --- | 1 | B60R E05B |
| A | FR-A-2568834 (SARL BBI) * page 2, lines 6 - 17 * --- | 1 | |
| A | FR-A-2451848 (DAIMLER-BENZ) * page 2, line 31 - page 3, line 33 * --- | 1 | |
| A | US-A-4673914 (LEE) * column 4, lines 46 - 56 * --- | 1 | |
| A | WO-A-8807796 (HONDA) * figures 20-25 * ----- | 1, 2 | |
| The present search report has been drawn up for all claims | | | |
| Place of search BERLIN | | Date of completion of the search 27 JULY 1990 | Examiner STANDRING, M |
| CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure I : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document | | | |

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